DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 336 CS 203 842

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TITLE An Ethic for Communication in International Development.
PUB DATE Aug 77
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (60th, Madison, Wisconsin, August 21-24, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Skills; Ethical Values; *Ethics; Information Theory; *International Programs; International Relations; Interpersonal Relationship; *Models

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model of communication's potential role in international development, suggesting that communication specialists use the model to help international development agencies reach their idealized goals. The model proposes that communication specialists follow five ethical principles: concentrate on process rather than program; work for the agency that most respects the receiver; maximize the strength of subgroups within the agency by enabling them to benefit from one another; link governmental planning systems to the receiver; and use mass media and interpersonal communications in ways that most effectively exchange ideas. The paper applies its communication principles to the work of an existing development agency, the Mennonite Central Committee, and concludes that this organization meets the philosophical requirements of the ethic but falls short in tasks that require academic or political expertise. (RL)

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AN ETHIC FOR COMMUNICATION IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Jan E. Swartzendruber*

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MASS COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETY DIVISION OF THE

ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM

FIRST PLACE, MOELLER UNDERGRADUATE COMPETITION

AUGUST 21-24, 1977

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INTRODUCTION

Communication may well be an absolute good, holding the agreeable connotations of "love," "understanding" and "brother- or sisterhood." In its ultimate glorification, communication could be linked to the idea of "the Word" referred to in the Gospel of John: "When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was."[1] Communication as the desire and attempt of living beings to contact one another cannot be a bad thing. But the content of communicated messages is open to judgement, as are the motives of the communicators. Even communication is subject to bad use.

Development is another word with a positive, progressive sound. Americans, whose history is full of conquests--some glorious, some ignoble--believe in the human capacity to subdue all enemies and control their own fate. We do our best to enjoy the rewards of the material wealth we have wrested from our land--and from others' lands as well. We like to think that the human labor and raw materials that we have taken from other nations is paid for by our contribution of technological innovations and the foreign aid budget.

We Americans also want other nations to develop as we have done, maybe in part because we are overwhelmed by the nightmare of billions of hungry people clamouring for a fairer proportion of the world's wealth. At any rate, development, along with

our desire to limit the Third World's population growth, is a most attractive goal to Americans who are concerned about our poorer neighbors on this globe. The goal of helping other nations gain control over the problems of poverty is a worthy one, but like all glittering ideas, the concept of development can tarnish in practice. We may contribute millions of dollars worth of earth moving equipment and engineering expertise to build a road in a poor nation, only to find that what we have really given is a sense of dependence and inferiority when the road crumbles due to lack of maintenance skills of the nationals.

The noble concepts of development and communication, which can go wrong in our hands, can also produce true benefits for all of us. Communication, an ultimate value, can save development from many of its disappointing or even destructive effects. Onesided motives, narrow perspectives and lack of pertinent information can be guarded against by the conscientious application of ethical principles by those who use communication in development. This paper will propose a connection between ethics, communication and development which can benefit, first, students of communication who desire to use their career for international benefit; and, second, anyone who seeks a humanitarian perspective on modernization and a way for the developed and less developed to respectfully cooperate as equals.

I shall approach this topic in three steps. They are, first, a sample of viewpoints on foreign intervention; second, a statement on communication's importance to development when applied according to principles which combine moral defensibility

with effectiveness; and, third, a critique of a development agency by the principles described in Section Two. These sections can be summarized as follows:

Section One: Is Intervention in Other Cultures Justified?

This major underlying question has faced various groups of Americans who are involved overseas. An overview of their answers will provide the background for communication ethics. Specifically, we shall see how anthropologists view themselves and what questions they face as they study other cultures; we shall see how the goals of United States foreign policy are pursued by the intervention of the U. S. Agency for International Development; and we shall look at a Christian rationale for initiating cultural change.

Section Two: Making Communication Central to Development

The second section sets forth the ethical principles which relate communication to development. The thesis is that communication's role in development is central because the basic activity of development is the spread of ideas. Communication can make the advocacy of new ideas more people-centered and adaptable.

Section Three: Analysis by Communication Ethics

The final section of the paper applies the communication principles to the work of an existing development agency, the Mennonite Central Committee. It asserts that as a religious body, this agency meets the philosophical requirements of the ethic but falls short in tasks which require academic or political expertise.

SECTION ONE

Justifying Intervention in Foreign Cultures: Three Views

All groups, which through self-interest or altruism attempt to speed or guide another group's process of development, face a common challenge: to make useful to others the principles, values, techniques or ideas that have served the developers. In other words, they must communicate, and if the second group belongs to a different culture, the job will be difficult. Cultural differences fill communication channels with bothersome noise which will inevitably alter the message to some degree.

Nevertheless, Westerners have judged their ideas applicable to the Third World and have faced this challenge. The lessons learned through their attempts have expanded the theory of communication of innovations. Research done on the diffusion of innovations has been collected by theorists such as Everett Rogers and Floyd Shoemaker, who wrote The Communication of Innovations.[2] Their generalizations are based on information gathered by social scientists who have quantified some of the factors in communicating innovations.

But independent of the scientific discipline of communication, scholars, governments and churchpeople have been discovering the role that communication plays in introducing change into peoples' life-ways. All three groups have benefitted from each other, if not by imitating another group,

then by defining their own position in contrast to another group's position. In this refining process, assumptions and motivations are analyzed: the foundations of cross-cultural communication come under scrutiny. Here the questions of ethics and world-view show themselves. The most fundamental of these questions is, "How do we justify intervention in a foreign culture?" Here are the responses of three quite different groups.

A. The Unsure Anthropologists

Governments, as overseers of society, have a great deal to say about increasing the general good, so it is not surprising that they should take part in development. Churchpeople, the perennial proselytizers, can also be expected to get involved where the issue of improving humanity arises. But how do scholars absorbed in disinterested, abstract inquiries enter the arena of suffering humanity? The anthropologists among them enter development activities with much expertise but widely varying convictions about the job.

The knowledge of the anthropologist has provided a key concept in cross-cultural communication--that is, cultural relativism, or respect for cultures on their own terms. This precept allows the anthropologist to value any culture for its self-consistency rather than judging it by a foreign standard. It also explains why anthropologists have most often studied and appreciated the inner working of a culture with no intention of changing it. Some anthropologists have even felt obligated to guard traditional cultures from change, for they have seen how conflict and decay result when change introduced by

outsiders comes too fast.

There are those anthropologists, however, who apply their discipline to help a government or agency achieve its goals, among which may be international development. But working for government agencies is a touchy involvement for anthropologists, who have learned from experience that the goals of such agencies are not always morally defensible nor publically announced. Robert A. Manners has pointed out that "for the colonial situation, at least. . . the anthropologist's professional advice may, if used at all, serve to facilitate the manipulation of the local population in violation of their own immediate interests."[3] Manners believes that anthropology has a role in foreign aid <u>if</u> there is agreement that aid is needed and should be introduced in a way that causes the least possible disorientation. The danger he sees is that the anthropologist may become only a predictor of resistance to objectives of colonial-like interests.[4]

While in the past anthropologists have occasionally been forced to intervene or have agreed to advise someone else who intervenes, now they face the demand for political and economic independence posed by the recipients of Western aid. Kathleen Gough explains the present situation: "the non-Western world is in a state of actual or potential revolution against the Western powers and against the kinds of native élites that are supported from the West. The United States government is the foremost counterrevolutionary force pitted against this revolutionary tide."[5] To support the demand for self-determination would mean, first, refusal to associate with

U. S. foreign policy and its agencies, such as the Agency for International Development. Second, to come to a decision on what constitutes justice would be to acknowledge, as Gough says, that "anthropology has not been and cannot be ethically neutral."[6] She regrets that anthropology "has lost sight of the initial question of the Enlightenment: 'How can the science of man help men to live more fully and creatively and to expand their dignity, self-direction and freedom?'"[7] An important task which anthropology has failed to take up, Gough says, is "to evaluate and analyze, as a world social system and an interconnected political economy, the structure of Western imperialism and . . . its impact on the non-Western world."[8]

Anthropology has examined and generalized the process of cultural change initiated from within a culture as well as from without. It has the vocabulary and concepts to facilitate the communication of innovations. The question anthropologists face is whether to devote themselves first to scholarly non-involvement or to the pursuit of "justice" as defined by a range of ideologies.

B. AID: "Enforced Humanitarianism"

The U.S. government's aid for foreign countries represents more money in proportion to idealistic talk than a good many church agencies combined could muster. This money ($1.8 billion in foreign economic assistance in 1974) also represents enlightened self-interest as well as "enforced humanitarianism," a phenomenon necessitated, says H. J. P. Arnold, by "the appalling depth of the development problems in the Third World."[9]

Arnold's book, Aid for Development; A Political and Economic Study, describes the historical development of U.S. foreign aid. The Marshall Plan of 1948 set the precedent for massive aid programs with its pledge to help reconstruct Western Europe. This was seen as a necessity because, in then-Secretary of State George Marshall's words, "without the return of normal economic health in the world there can be no political stability and no assured peace."[10]

In the 1950s foreign aid became closely tied to military assistance due to the Cold War as signaled by the Korean Conflict in 1950-52. President Truman's "Fourth Point" aid program got off the ground just in time to cover the military expense of the Korean Conflict.

President Kennedy changed the tone of foreign aid by trying to separate it from military aid: "We have a positive interest in helping less developed nations provide decent living standards for their people and achieve sufficient strength, self-respect and independence to become self-reliant members of the community of nations. And thus our aid should be conditional on the recipients' ability and willingness to reach that goal."[11] Kennedy's proposal of a "super agency" for foreign aid resulted in the formation in 1961 of the Agency for International Development, which took over the jobs of several former agencies. However, Kennedy's proposal that military aid be part of the defense budget rather than the foreign aid budget was not accepted by Congress. President Johnson favored continued unity of military and foreign aid, for he believed that, "Military assistance. . . provides a shield behind which economic

and social development can take place."[12] This attitude helps explain why "the major recipients of U.S. economic aid. . . have been those 'border' or 'forward defense' countries which have entered into military agreements with the U.S. or have shown themselves prepared to maintain large military establishments directed against the Soviet Union or her allies." [13]

When a country is not in a strategic cold war position, funds from the U. S. Agency for International Development are dependent on stiff conditions: "For most projects our minimum requirements are a substantial host country contribution [at least 50 percent of local costs[14]] and the finding that the project is integrally related to the country's general development framework."[15] A national development plan is considered a "major self-help measure" by AID because it helps in evaluating a project's success and deciding where technical assistance is needed. These requirements of participation and planning by the host government allow it to protect its own sense of sovereignty and self-determination.

Of the non-cash forms of U.S. aid, a sizeable contribution is the service of specialists and technicians. The attitudes of U.S. government employees working overseas reflect to some extent the national attitude toward intervention in foreign cultures. Francis C. Byrnes studied American technical specialists abroad and divided their communication orientations into three categories. Of 31 Americans surveyed, 18 were source-oriented--that is, most concerned about building their own credibility and acceptance with nationals. Nine Americans were oriented towards interaction, desiring to establish mutual confidence and respect. Only four

Americans were receiver-oriented, or mainly concerned about getting to know the nationals.[16]

The self-consciousness of Americans abroad is understandable when one considers the number of roles the American technical advisors feel they play. Byrnes's study produced the following list: (1) representative of U.S. foreign policy, (2) change agent, (3) representative of a profession, (4) advisor, trainer or teacher, (5) doer, (6) humanitarian, (7) intermediary between two organizations, and (8) friend. [17] These roles demand source orientation, except for "change agent," "intermediary" and "friend." Unfortunately for the future of U.S. aid efforts, source orientation can be considered evidence of the Western imperialism which Third World countries reject. Source orientation also fails to give due emphasis to the communication principle that "change agent success is positively related to client orientation rather than to change agency orientation."[18] Hopefully, U.S. foreign policy will seriously consider whether the Third World can best be helped by regarding our economic system and cultural assumptions as their model.

C. Church and Culture Change

If any of these three groups can hear the moral protest of the Third World against Western imperialism, it should be the Christian church, whose business includes mediating moral dilemmas. But revolutionary politics is something to which most churches are not yet ready to commit themselves.

Most often the church has been the dispenser of charity, the Good Samaritan tending the victim's wounds. Development

entered church agendas when leaders recognized prevention of suffering as a task as valid as comforting sufferers. Naturally, the long-standing sympathy for the oppressed has produced Christian radicals, some who go so far as to approve armed revolt rather than tolerate injustice. But most church groups have not been able to sort out their sympathies and discover how their resources can best be applied to varied categories of problems--economic, political, spiritual.

While a good many churches have not yet settled the development issue, consensus on the necessity of intervention and cultural change is universal, originating with the Great Commission: "Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples." Missionaries essentially are change agents: "There is no other way of introducing new, Christian beliefs and practice or new socio-economic ideas than by effectively persuading individuals to deviate from their traditional ways," says Catholic anthropologist Louis J. Luzbetak in his book, The Church and Culture.

One of the best-articulated strategies for cross-cultural intervention is that of the Catholic Church. Its position on foreign missions calls for "accommodation, an adjustment in attitude, behavior and apostolic approach" to the native culture.[19] Apostolic approach refers to the method of changing peoples' ideas through the use of communication. Effective communication, says Luzbetak, is only achieved through cultural understanding; therefore, he believes that a knowledge of anthropology is essential in the training of missionaries.[20]

Charles Elliott, author of The Development Debate, represents a view of development which is radical but not revolutionary

in the usual sense. "Redemptive suffering," he says, will establish "the real humanizing society."[21] The Christian's "special calling to take the hopeless seriously" means "putting one's care. . . not where it will do the most good, but where the structure of the relationships of the world normally exclude care."[22]

Elliott believes that churches should try to further social justice, but he explains why they cannot expect much success:

> Unless the local sponsoring body and the donor agency come to [a project] with a very similar ideological position, it is inevitable that suspicion is generated on the one side and frustrations on the other. . . [Such projects] are immensely demanding. They demand great sensitivity and sometimes great courage on behalf of the originators. They demand local leadership of an unusually high order. They demand understanding and patience, often over a very long period, on behalf of the donors.[23]

Both Luzbetak and Elliott put greater stress on human interaction than do government employees or anthropologists involved in foreign intervention. Anthropologists overbalance on the side of receiver orientation and do not necessarily justify intervention at all. Some of them, however, feel a moral obligation to contribute their knowledge, even though it may commit them to a particular political viewpoint. U.S. government specialists are heavy on self-consciousness, and U.S. AID gives priority to nations who can benefit this country's political interests. In contrast, church groups are more likely to deal with universal and interpersonal principles. Realizing that communication requires a difficult two-way exchange by individuals who see themselves primarily as friends and equals, they base their intervention on a religious understanding of what

brings about the greatest human wholeness and transnational unity.

SECTION TWO

Making Communication Central to Development

We have seen how various groups view intervention in foreign cultures. A point of disagreement among them is whether social change ought to be initiated by outsiders, and if so, how communication should contribute to intervention. But what does the developing world itself think about intervention? How should developed nations hear and adapt to Third World viewpoints? In this section a set of ethical principles will be proposed that will guide those who apply the science of communication to development. These principles focus on the need for a two-way exchange of viewpoint and information; they are interaction-oriented, a stance which gives equal importance to the input of each side of the exchange. By thus affirming participation and cooperation, the ethic can produce a qualitatively different form of intervention useful to and respectful of the development processes of the Third World.

A. A Christian Rationale for Intervention

Development, as I use the term, means planned intervention in social systems to bring about social change that results in a "better" situation for all.[1] "Better," at minimum, would mean better health, more opportunity for a constructive occupation,

a greater sense of choice and control over life, and the likelihood of passing these benefits on to future generations. While these goals may be at the core of most development plans, development assumptions often do not stop there; such things as industrialization, free enterprise, population control and urbanization may also be goals.

An ethical screen for applying communication to development would include not those peripheral goals, but only those justified by universal Christian values. While an anthropologist may consider knowledge itself an ultimate value, and the state is the final beneficiary of foreign policy, the Christian who intervenes will have at heart the happiness or fulfillment of humanity.

Whether Christianity expresses itself as meeting spiritual needs or treating more tangible economic wounds, either activity can be considered stewardship, the wise investment of God-given resources for the welfare of others. Stewardship is an expression of other principles: love, justice, peace, sacrificial suffering, and so on. While these concepts hold differing shades of meaning for different people, they all point to our responsibility to be involved in the fate of others so as to achieve together more of God's dignity and purpose for human existence.

A Christian communicator must be careful not to load universal religious values with his/her own cultural baggage, but a belief in the common destiny of all people can provide an enduring rationale for interaction-oriented work in development.

B. Communication as a Value in Development

Speaking of the economic assumptions of Third World development plans, E. F. Schumacher, author of Small Is Beautiful; Economics as if People Mattered, says: "It is much easier to deal with goods than with people--if only because goods have no minds of their own and raise no problems of communication."[2] Fundamentally, the science of communication is concerned with meaning rather than material. The successful sharing of meaning between minds cannot be taken for granted in the same way that we trust a trucking firm to deliver a load of groceries. Communication in its fullest sense is much more than a message signal stimulating an optical or auditory nerve. Communication deals with the human and mechanical factors that impede or promote mutual understanding. It is the human factors with which this paper is concerned; examples are status, language and age differences, authority and conformity.

Communication is of value to development because it studies human interaction. Of special importance is the study of feedback, the mechanism which closes the communication circuit and indicates the success of message comprehension. The concept of feedback helps applied communication to be reflective, self-modifying and receptive to evaluation and criticism, qualities that can be of great use to development.

Furthermore, communication is of value in itself: much shared knowledge and experience is always preferable to isolated individual experience. Therefore, communication has a special role in development for two reasons: (1) because it highlights the basic activity of development, the spread of ideas and

adoption of innovations, and (2) because a communication emphasis on interaction makes the advocacy of innovations more human, more receptive to correction and more versatile.

C. Ethical Principles for Communication in Development

1. Focus on Process Before an American communication specialist ever leaves for the Third World, he/she should be able to answer affirmatively the question, "Is what I can offer needed and wanted by the potential acceptors?"* If the communication specialist (also called the communicator) receives a job offer from a voluntary or government agency, that indicates the agency's perception that his/her talents fit its need.

However, the communicator is advised to regard humility and openness as the most important qualifications for the job. A communicator, whose role is to create links between people, must be first a listener, not a fiery-eyed prophet incensed at poverty and insistent on one style of action. Pride, self-respect, self-determination, national sovereignty and cultural cohesiveness all bristle at the prospect of a foreigner analyzing national problems, passing judgements and prescribing remedial actions. Advice taken from a strong-willed foreign advocate is likely to require a sacrifice of the receiver's integrity, which will mean eventual failure of the innovation.

Therefore, the first principle for a communicator is to

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*Acceptors, as used by Everett Rogers, refers to those who adopt an innovation (make an "innovative-decision"). In basic communication theory, the acceptor is parallel to the "destination," the person who receives a message. I will also call potential acceptors "receivers."

concentrate on process rather than program, and trust the correct process to result in the best program. This is not merely a personal strategy for effective performance by the communicator; the principle of process before program should be applied in every phase and level of development work.

2. Respect for the Receiver The second ethical principle is this: Work for the agency which most respects the receiver. Schumacher reminds us that development planners are normally the rich, educated and urbanized, while those who need help are poor, uneducated and non-urban. Therefore, he says,

> The first problem of development aid is how to bridge these three gulfs. . . . Poor peasants cannot suddenly acquire the outlook and habits of sophisticated city people. If people cannot adapt themselves to the methods, then the methods must be adapted to the people.[3]

If any agency operates on Western assumptions without taking into account the local social organization and culture, it will not only fail in its goals but may cause counter-productive disorientation and frustration in the process.

An organization which plays the role of benefactor (genie or Santa Claus), authority and boss is not inviting sufficient participation by the nationals. It is thus bypassing an important form of diffusion--the group decision process. Everett Rogers calls this group process the "collective innovative-decision" and states that the degree of satisfaction with such a decision "is positively related to the degree of participation of members of the social system in the decision."[4] The reasons for this are (1) that individuals will know the extent of group consensus, (2) the decision will reflect the needs of the group

as they perceive them, and (3) the local opinion leaders who influenced the decision will also advocate cooperation with it.

While a foreign communicator cannot direct a collective innovative-decision, there is a need for a change agent who plays the role of stimulator, according to Rogers. Provided that the change agent is on friendly terms with the village's own initiators, the innovative idea can be channeled through these nationals. There is also great advantage in the presence of a technician who can advise on the material aspects of the decision. If the outside expert is a communication specialist, he/she may be able to speed the political process involved, as Rogers suggests, by identifying "legitimizers."[5] (A legitimizer is a high-status member of the group who can sanction an innovation which someone else has suggested and planned.) In this way the community and the outside experts form a mutually dependent team.

Responsiveness and teamwork between developers and the hosts is what makes "client orientation" more productive than "change agency orientation." Client-oriented change agents, says Rogers, will be more concerned about feedback, will have higher credibility because of greater rapport with the client, and will be able to tailor programs more closely to the clients' needs.[6]

Ronald G. Havelock, editor of Planning for Innovation through Dissemination and Utilization of Knowledge, calls this interaction between user systems and resource systems "linkage." It is successful only if it is a two-way, continuous attempt

> to stimulate each other's problem solving behavior. . . . This type of collaborative interaction will not only make

> solutions more relevant and effective, but it will also build relationships of trust. . . . These trust relationships can, over time, become channels for the rapid, effective and efficient transfer of information.[7]

A communicator should bring this emphasis on mutual stimulation to a development agency and systematize its operation in case the theory is not being practised effectively.

3. Linking Sub-systems A communication specialist is a linker, or one who constantly emphasizes the importance of knowledge exchange. In some cases he/she may be a researcher at the village level--one who studies the flow of information and authority between social subgroups: the individual to the family, the family to the clan, the opinion leader to interests groups, power holders to opinion leaders, and so on. However, since it is impossible for one specialist to collect adequate information on all aspects of a social system, the communicator is more likely to be a member of a team which includes sociologists and political scientists as well as extension agents, technicians and administrators. In this case the communicator's role is to stress linkage between the various sectors of the development delivery system. At either level, village or agency, the communication specialist will deal with organizations, that is, interacting subgroups with specialized functions, each necessary for the organization's success.

This brings us to the third ethical principle, which is as much a matter of practicality as of right and wrong: A communicator should seek to maximize the strength of subgroups by enabling them to benefit from one another. Schumacher sees

great potential in the work of voluntary development agencies if they can cooperate with one another:

> Conferences have been held in many countries to discuss [voluntary agencies'] common problems, and it has become ever more apparent that even the most self-sacrificing efforts of the voluntary workers cannot bear proper fruit unless there is a systematic organization of knowledge and an equally systematic organization of communications--in other words, unless there is something that might be called an "intellectual infrastructure."[8]

This is subgroup linkage within the delivery system.

Another form of subgroup linkage is found within governmental organization. Denis Goulet, in his book, The Cruel Choice, sums up development opinion about government: "Even staunch internationalist developers agree that the most important single locus of decision-making is the national government."[9] Goulet defends nationalism as necessary for developing countries. At the same time he admits that "national governments, which usually act as the most vigorous advocates of developmental change, are rarely trusted by the populations they profess to serve."[10] Isolated, traditional societies often feel much more committed to their family, tribe or religion than to the abstract concept of nationhood. Yet as modernization and mass media eventually tear these communities from their isolation, the familiar structures of kinship and religion will break down, and a broader organizing principle will be needed. Without it, psychic and social disorientation will be aggravated by political and program discontinuity.

It is natural and appropriate that national governments should take over the integration function at a macro-level. While it is good to have a united network of voluntary agencies,

their work will be frustrated unless it fits with national policy. All the big decisions in development--creating a national ethos, construction of roads and power plants, public education or population policy--all of these affect the activities of voluntary agencies. But they are not the domain of subgroups, especially foreign-based groups. Havelock rightly names government the over-all coordinator: "The role of government should be to monitor the 'natural' knowledge flow system and develop means to support, facilitate and coordinate linkage activities so that the total system can function more effectively."[11]

This means that the development planning of national governments must take on an integrative function of ever-increasing scope. The government machinery needed to administrate this all-inclusive task will itself require good design and maintenance in order to keep specialized subdivisions working closely together. A communication specialist within a national development bureaucracy will deal with organizational communication--concepts such as information flow (input, throughput, output; vertical and horizontal flow) and what inhibits or facilitates it.[12]

4. Linking the Bureaucracy and the Base

A national government is not necessarily in touch with its lowest class citizens even when the two groups inhabit the same city, which is common and will become more so due to massive rural-to-urban migration. A communicator must be more and more alert, as he/she approaches the top layer of national development planning, that communication channels are indeed open to the villagers and the urban poor. Goulet's concern

is that "summit planning must be redesigned so that 'inputs' from other levels effectively determine its own output."[13] He sees several dangers in top level planning: (1) "the illusion of omniscience," (2) the "inclination to impose goals," (3) "the danger of over-abstraction" and (4) disrespect for human values. Goulet's main question is "can planners realistically expect a populace in misery to reject its obsolete outlook on life unless planning itself ceases to be the esoteric art of an elite whose values are incomprehensible when not hostile to that populace?"[14] A communication specialist is sensitive to this estrangement and strives to facilitate linkage between planners and recipients.

5. Combining Mass Communication and Interpersonal Communication

Mass media--radio, film, television, literature--has its place in the communication of innovations. Some communication specialists may deal specifically in these forms of media, or in smaller scale efforts including visual aids for educational programs. The principle to remember here is that mass media work well in reaching large audiences and spreading information, but they cannot change deeply-held attitudes.[15] Interpersonal channels, because they allow ideas to flow both ways, are better able to cause value change than media which are subject to an individual's screens of selective exposure, perception and retention.[16]

As noted earlier, modernization will inevitably increase villagers' exposure to the outside world. The real question is not whether people will receive information, but whether they can adapt their former social system to accommodate it. This

process will be aided by group solidarity and group decision-making. One way to bring the group's strength to the use of mass media is the media forum. By following a radio or television program with group discussion led by a trained "monitor," these forums incorporate the strengths of mass and interpersonal communication. The combination has special appeal because (1) interest is drawn to it by group expectations; (2) there is greater acceptance of decisions made by groups, which are a good setting for attitude change; and (3) the novelty of the medium gives it extra credibility.[17] Considering the vastness of the new world opening up to traditional societies, not to also provide them settings for group process of information would be a violation of communication ethics.

6. Summary

> Political will diffused throughout a population, judicious goal-setting and resource allocation, vigorous implementation and perpetual correction are the measures required for development.
>
> --E. F. Schumacher[18]

> At a gross level, the prime task of knowledge utilization is to bring these great sub-systems into effective linkage with each other; the kind of reciprocal stimulation-and-feedback relationships. . . needs to be established at the interface between systems. . . . linkage between systems is the essential process in any effort at planned social change.
>
> --Ronald G. Havelock[19]
> (Center for Research on Utilization of Scientific Knowledge)

I have treated communication at the level of subgroups, groups and systems rather than as a one-to-one interaction. Because development is a task, not of single agencies or even of single nations, but rather of three continents in the

developing world, it is important to see the need for linkage on an appropriate scale. Communicators should see themselves as part of agencies in league with other agencies, which cooperate with national governments, which hopefully support one another--developed and developing alike.

Ethical principles for communication in development are:

First: Concentrate on process rather than program.

Second: Work for the agency which most respects the receiver.

Third: Maximize the strength of subgroups by enabling them to benefit from one another.

Fourth: Link governmental planning systems to the receiver.

Fifth: Use mass media in the context of groups to allow interpersonal processing of information.

My aim has been to help communicators see themselves as agents of "perpetual correction" and enablers of "linkage between systems." As such, communication specialists can play a central role in the development process. This is a presumptuous position for communication to claim, because in a real sense all human knowledge deals with interface. Communication is merely the glue holding various fields of knowledge together.

When one begins to study this universal "glue," it can be done in any imaginable realm of human endeavor. For example, Everett Rogers focuses on communication's role in diffusion of innovations, a topic researched already by the fields of anthropology, early sociology, rural sociology, education, medical sociology and marketing. The heading "dissemination and utilization of knowledge" used by Havelock in the CRUSK study refers to a collection of material from eleven fields of knowledge,

of which communication is only one. However, in all eleven fields, dispersal and use of knowledge surely involves communication.

Therefore it is abstracting to take communication out of the myriad human interactions of which it is necessarily a part. The goal has not been to minimize the importance of all human sciences to development. Rather, it is to call attention to the medium which makes them all useful. In this sense, the medium, communication, has become the message and a value in itself. More communication and more complete (that is, sensitive, attentive, responsive) communication is a source of fulfillment to human beings. And as a means of achieving a more just and peaceful form of development, communication can increase empathy and understanding along with material benefits for the people of the Third World.

SECTION THREE

Analysis by Communication Ethics

The five principles for the use of communication in development are now to be tested by application to a small, church-related development agency, the Mennonite Central Committee. The principles should enable analysis and constructive criticism of both the strong and weak areas of MCC's philosophy and program.

Most of the data for this analysis could not be gathered by personal interviews on the field or at MCC headquarters. However, the acquaintance with the organization gained through

two years of voluntary work at the headquarters in Akron, Pennsylvania, contributes to this section, as do the six weeks spent in an informal study-service assignment at an MCC program site in Haiti. A potential source of information is the annual MCC Workbook, a collation of yearly reports by country directors summarizing all MCC service projects. The most recent Workbook was not, however, consulted. Rather, a conflict-oriented approach is taken, basing the critique on summaries by MCC personnel in which the crucial issues of development philosophy and strategy are lifted out. Sources, therefore, are limited to MCC documents and publications, including the in-service workers' newsletter and news stories released to Mennonite periodicals.

A. Description of the Agency

> Mennonite Central Committee is a service agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches of North America. The ministries of MCC are understood by our church as a Christian response to human need and an integral part of the church's witness in word and deed to the whole person.[1]

This statement is taken from the preamble of an "MCC Statement on Program Assumptions, Objectives and Priorities," a two-page outline containing the skeletal program priorities of MCC. It is important to know, in addition, that MCC, though it is relatively small in budget, is known for its strong voluntary personnel. Its high proportion of volunteers to dollars is possible because of the close tie it maintains to its constituent denominations. These churches have a membership which is highly aware of MCC and supportive of it, through money-

raising "relief sales," congregational budgets, personal gifts and donations of talent in one-, two-and three-year terms of voluntary service.

The consciousness of "VS" as an ever-open option for young people before, during and after college contributes to MCC's ability to assign numerous young people to jobs such as teaching, agricultural extension, nutrition and child care programs, management of self-help crafts programs and technical projects such as dam construction. MCC also places nurses, a few M.D.s and other medical technicians. "Personnel" is the first resource MCC lists as it means of meeting world needs. In 1976, 582 volunteers served overseas, and income included $8,238,000 from constituents and $2,709,000 from other sources.[2]

B. Evaluation of Philosophy and Strategy

1. Process vs. Program. MCC's stated assumptions include the expectation that "Our involvements will take place in a spirit of mutual respect, realizing that we must put as much effort into learning as we do into teaching." Another goal is to "participate in a development process based on local capacity and self-reliance." Priorities include a commitment to "programs in which MCC or constituent national churches or mission boards have administrative responsibilities, as opposed to programs to which MCC loans personnel only" and to "programs which have a high degree of local participation."

The phrases "mutual respect," "local capacity and self-reliance" and "local participation" show MCC's sensitivity to working out development programs in cooperation with the

local people. Two booklets published by MCC, "Thoughts on Development" and "Humanization and Development," also contain this emphasis. For example, Merrill Ewert in the latter booklet, says, "The role of the expatriate advisor is not to control decisions or the flow of information but to help create optimal conditions in which the local people can determine their own direction."[3] In "Thoughts on Development" Edgar Stoesz says, "In short, development is a process with sequence and rhythm, and the process is as important as the end result. The initiative and the responsibility for what happens must remain with the receiving system, but a limited amount of carefully disciplined external assistance can be helpful."[4]

2. Respect for Receivers. It is evident from the testimony of MCC overseas personnel that they place great value on establishing relationships of mutual integrity and respect with the nationals. One former teaching volunteer in Zaire wrote, "I left Zaire knowing that I had built many friendships, among them a few that were as sincere and as profound as any I had known before . . . . When I look back on the time I spent in Zaire, I remember with the greatest joy the friendships I made."[5] An agriculturist in Haiti says, "Above all, any agriculturist who comes here should learn the language and want to make friends. To educate you need good communication, and as you teach you should also be building the farmer's feeling of self-respect."[6]

These comments make it clear that process is important to MCC's style of development and that MCC volunteers do respect the receivers. However, MCCers are also involved in a dialogue

bringing rebuttals and questions to the formal statements of development ideals. The volunteer who spoke of the friendships made in Zaire also added, "But I wonder, is friendship enough?" A volunteer in Indonesia writes in response to the Ewert booklet: "I would be interested in knowing by what methods a person who has been through the 'process of humanization' or 'conscientization' can (1) gain increasing control over his own destiny, (2) end exploitative social relationships, and (3) acquire equal access to productive resources of a society."[7] There is, in other words, a consciousness that being friendly people and making life better for a few people is not all that development offers nor all that is possible.

3. Linking Subgroups. My critique is that while MCC has some of the best possible people for making person-to-person contacts at the grassroots level, MCC is weak in applying principle three: "Maximize the strength of subgroups by enabling them to benefit from one another." MCC is a communicative organization within its church boundaries: its news service, for example, keeps its constituents in much closer touch with action on the field than do many development agencies'. Workers keep in touch with one another through annual retreats, a newsletter and personal correspondence. MCC does cooperate with other agencies through joint programs and the loaning of personnel. Even so, workers have felt a lack of unity and shared strategy on the problems that are common to the rural poor wherever they are found.[8] This shows up at several levels: MCC's cooperation with indigenous organizations; cooperation with other foreign

agencies; intra-MCC communication; and cooperation with national governments.

On the first level, indigenous ventures, MCC philosophy is clear: "The highest goal of a development agency is to strengthen or create an institution through which services it has helped to facilitate will be continued."[9] MCC recognizes the existence of complex problems in making the transfer of institutions from outsiders to nationals. MCC's success in this has been mixed, and the level of analysis and understanding about how to manage the variables involved is not adequate to prevent a feeling of resignation. A volunteer working as advisor in business administration for a handicrafts cooperative, which was experiencing instability after nationalization, said, "We're bucking a long history. Maybe when we discuss the co-op's independence we should talk in decades rather than years."[10] This timetable may in fact be realistic, but it is too early to conclude that this is so before having studied all the options for managing indigenization.

The second level--cooperation with other foreign agencies--comes into play here, because the range of possibility cannot be known without broad contact with development efforts and research on every level, from the voluntary agency's "tried-and true" wisdom to the deliberations of the United Nations Conferences on Trade and Development. While MCC has a valuable resource in the highly motivated and empathetic personnel it can recruit, it has not discovered how to maximize this area of specialization by relying on the know-how and expertise of

of organizations which are stronger in other areas. Because of the need to be accountable for the way it spends its money, MCC prefers to work in "programs in which MCC or constituent national churches or mission boards have administrative responsibilities, as opposed to programs to which MCC loans personnel only." This may be causing more problems than it is solving.

For example, MCCer Jim Bowman has identified the role of "funder" as a major obstacle to being a "facilitator": "A facilitator can't possibly be a funder--they are a contradiction of terms. . . . Actually, a village must accept 'development' as presented to them by us or get nothing at all, which is of course paternalistic and manipulative."[11] Any great achievement of modern civilization is made through specialization, and development is a task of the twentieth century which is no exception. Havelock states, "Effective knowledge utilization also requires a degree of division of labor, coordination and collaboration through the social system."[12] MCC, by trying to play too many roles at which it is an amateur, is hindering its own success. It is failing to maximize the strength of subgroups.

4. Linking Government and Receivers. A level at which MCC personnel show conflicting sympathies is in cooperation with national governments. One country director feels cynical about the government's inclination and intention to set right unjust economic and social systems. He even rejects the social system of the small town in which he serves, feeling it oppresses the rural farmers and destroys their self-confidence and initiative. He is not willing to work with existing power structures

unless they are below the town level.

While Ewert is open to working under a country's ministry of agriculture, he is not optomistic about the ministry's will or ability to carry through the reorganization or training that would be needed for a more comprehensive extension service.[13] Stoesz comments, "It has been correctly said that effective government is the good soil in which all of these other efforts thrive. Effective governments, however, do not characterize the Third World. At best they are weak and at worst repressive. In many cases development is possible only with structural changes which bring about a radical redistribution of power."[14]

The last word on cooperation with national programs seems to be Ewert's: if the government is not active in reshaping its rural economy, "the voluntary agencies [should] look for other areas in which they can contribute to nation building and development."[15] Although MCC seems to be failing in principle four, it would be justified in shifting part of the responsibility to development planners within the governments. Even so, a greater effort should be made to discover patterns and prototypes for spreading the specialized tasks of development among more agencies under the coordination of government. The Mennonite constituency has a heritage of non-participation in government, a distaste for political processes and an abhorrence of violence; therefore it is not surprising that MCC has remained unentangled with political powers. A communication model of development would not justify this isolation from such an important locus of policy-making and money allocation.

5. Use of Mass Media. MCC work overseas does not make wide use of mass media. MCC adult education classes--in nutrition and family planning, for example--have made use of filmstrips, and some MCC personnel overseas have produced such visual aids themselves. Mass media such as radio or educational television probably require more financial investment and centralized national planning than MCC is ready for.

6. Summary. The ethical principles for communication strategy are followed by MCC on at least two levels: (1) MCC's philosophy is consistent with an emphasis on process and respect for the receivers; (2) at an interpersonal level of communication MCCers appear to be demonstrating an unusually high quality process of bridging cultural barriers and creating good will.

Another level at which there is great potential within MCC is its tie to the constituency. MCC personnel are conscious of role the United States must play in allowing the Third World a fair share of world resources. One volunteer suggests that North American churches should take up the task of locating and stopping the exploitative activities of the U.S.: "The task of discovering exploitation is monumental for even the intellectuals among us but one we might accomplish collectively . . . . If the donors to MCC and Third World MCC volunteers have a common philosophy we could conceivably develop a creative Christian world force in North America as well as elsewhere in the world!"[16]

With its strengths in personnel and constituency, MCC has an important role to play in international development. It

must, however, seek greater linkage to other non-Mennonite groups in order to maximize these strengths and drop the functions, such as "creating" indigenous institutions, at which it is weak.

CONCLUSION

What is the role of communication specialists in international development? I have not answered that question descriptively, for my intention was not to describe what <u>is</u> being done, although a thorough investigation of that topic could undoubtedly illuminate much of my theory. Rather, I have presented a model of communication's potential role in development, a role which can challenge communication students to bring development closer to the cooperative, rational and liberating activity it should be. If this "Word" for development can become incarnate, we will learn a bit more about what is involved in creating meaningful human contact.

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